

Leviticus 25:1 to 26:2 Torah Reading (Parshat BeHar)
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version May 6, 2020

25:1 And spoke YHWH to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,
2 [You must speak] to the children of Israel and say to them, When you enter the land, (the land that I am giving to you, then must rest the earth—a sabbath for YHWH .
3 For six years you will sow your field; For six years you will prune your vineyard. [And you may gather] its produce.
4 But in year number seven, a sabbath of sabbaths there shall be for the earth: a sabbath for YHWH.
Your field you may not sow; your vineyard you may not prune.
5 And furthermore, the aftergrowth of your harvest you may not reap, and the grapes of your untrimmed vines you may not pick.
A year of rest it will be for the land.
6 [But the produce] [from “the sabbath] [of the land]” is for you for eating: for you, for your servant, and for your handmaid, [for your hired hand], [and the resident worker] who dwells with you.
7 [For your domestic animal] and the wild beast that roams in your land shall be all the produce, for them to eat.
8 You must count [for yourselves] seven sabbatical years: seven years, seven times.
So [there will be for you]—the time [of the seven] sabbath cycles—nine and forty years.
9 [Then there must sound forth] a shofar blast in month number seven, on the tenth day of the month, on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), you must sound the shofar, [throughout your land].
10 [You must sanctify] this—the year—the fiftieth year, and proclaim emancipation in the land: to all its inhabitants.
A jubilee it will be for you. [You will return]—[each man] [to his ancestral property]. Each one must to his family return.
11 A jubilee [it shall be], [this year]—the fiftieth year—it will be for you.
You shall not sow, [you shall not] harvest its aftergrowth, nor shall you pick, [from the untrimmed vines].
12 Indeed it is the jubilee. Holy it shall be for you. [From only the field] you shall eat its produce.
13 In the jubilee year, when it comes, [you will return], [end aliyah] [each man] [to his ancestral heritage].

25:14 [Now when you sell] property to your fellow, or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow,
 let not mistreat—any man—his brother.

15 [By the number] of years after the jubilee, [you must buy it] from your fellow.
 By the number of years left of produce (till the next jubilee) [he must sell it to you].

16 [If there should be] many [years left to go], [you may charge him dear] for his purchase;
 [But if there should be] few years left, [you must charge him less] for his purchase, because it is a number of *harvests* that he is selling to you.

17 [For one must not] mistreat—any man—his fellow. [You must be in awe] of your God, [for indeed], I am YHWH your God.

18 [You must observe] My laws, my rules you must follow. [You must surely] keep them. And you will live in the land securely.

19 [Then will give forth] the earth its fruit, and you may eat your fill, You will rest securely upon it.

20 [If you] should say, “[What shall we eat] in the seventh year?”, if [we may neither] sow nor gather our crops?”

21 [I will send forth] my blessing to you, in year number six, [that the land yields] its crops for a full three years.

22 [You will sow your crops] in year number eight, [but you will eat] from the crops of the past,
 [all the way until] year [number nine]. [Until there comes] that year’s produce, you will eat what is old.

23 [Further, the land] [must not be] sold in perpetuity, since Mine is the land. [As sojourning people] [residing therein] are you to Me.

24 In all the lands you inherit, [end aliyah] [a time of redemption] you must give to the earth.

25 [If one becomes poor] [among your brothers], and he sells [some of his holdings],
 [then must come]—[as his redeemer]—[a close relative] of his, [and he shall redeem] [that which] was sold by his brother.

26 [And should there be a man] [whose condition is such] that there is no one for him, [to redeem him],
 [but he gets enough] [by his own hand]: he has what is needed to redeem it,

27 [he must reckon] the years [since its sale], [and pay back] what [is left over] to the person [to whom] [he sold it], and go back to his holding.

28 But if it has not been found [by his own hand] [the amount that is needed] to pay [the man back],
 [then must remain] [what he has sold] in the hands of the one [who bought it], until the year of the jubilee.
 [It shall be released] in the jubilee, [end aliyah] [and he shall come back] [to his holding].

25:29 [If there be a man] who sell [a house of dwelling] in a town with walls,
[then shall remain] [his right of redemption] [until the end] of the year of its sale. [For a full year] shall remain its period of redemption.
30 And if [it has not been redeemed] until [there has elapsed for him] a year,—[a complete year], [then there shall pass] [the house in the city]—
the city [being one with walls]—irrevocably to the one who bought it, [for his generations]. It will not be released in the jubilee.
31 But as for houses [in villages]—ones [that do not have] walls [around them]: as open fields of the land, they are reckoned.
Redemption [there may be for them]—in the jubilee [they shall be released].
32 As for the cities of the Levites—the houses in the cities in their possession—the right of redemption forever belongs to the Levites.
33 [That which is] redeemed from the Levites [must be released]—[the house that is sold]—in the city of their holding, at the Jubilee.
For [the houses of] the towns of the Levites—they [are their property] among the children of Israel.
34 [But the fields] surrounding their cities, are not to be sold, [since a possession] [for all time] [end aliyah] it is for them.
35 [If one becomes poor] [among your brothers]—enfeebled is his hand, in your midst.
[Then you must strengthen] him: [like a sojourner] [or a resident settler], he must live [beside you].
36 [Do not take] [from him] advance [or accrued interest], [but be in awe] of your God. Let him live as a brother [beside you].
37 [Your own money] do not lend him [at advanced interest], [and at accrued interest] do not give him food.
38 [I am indeed] YH[WH] your God, Who brought you out from the land of Egypt,
[that I might] [give to you] the land of Canaan, [end aliyah] and be for you, as *Elohim* (God).
39 [When there sinks down] [your brother into poverty], beside you, [and he gives himself over* to you],
do not make him work, the work of a slave. *Orlinsky, 'Notes on the New Translation of the Torah'
40 Like an employee or like a guest he shall be by your side*. Only till the year of the jubilee, will he serve with you. *Orlinsky
41 [Then will he go out] [from you], himself and his children with him, and go back to his family; to the heritage of his fathers, he shall return.
42 [Since My servants] are they, who brought them out from the land of Egypt. They must not be sold like the sale of a slave.
43 Don't subjugate him [with hard labor], [but stand in awe] of your God.
44 Your slave and your maidservant who belong to you,
who come from the *goyim*—the nations that are all around you—from them you may purchase a slave or a maidservant.

25:45 [And furthermore], from the children of the residents who dwell with you,
from them you may purchase, from their family that lives among you, whom they begot in your land, they will be for you a possession.
46 You shall hold them as a heritage for your children after you, to inherit as a possession, for the ages you [may make them] serve you,
but as [for your brothers], [the *B'nei Yisrael*], each one toward his brother, [end aliyah] do not subjugate him [with crushing labor].
47 Now [if there should gain] the upper hand [of an alien] or visitor among you, and there sinks down your brother into poverty, beside him,
[and he sells himself] to an alien or visitor among you, or to an offshoot of the family of the alien,
48 after he is sold, redemption [shall be his]: one of his brothers shall redeem him—
49 [or it could be his uncle], [or his uncle's] son [who will redeem him], [or a relative]—[one of his own flesh]—
[someone from his family] [must redeem him], or if his hand can attain it [*i.e.* he has the means], [he may redeem himself].
50 He must reckon with his purchaser, from the year he was sold to him, until the year of the jubilee,
[and it will be], that the silver from his sale [shall be by the number] of years. Like the days of an employee he must be treated by him.
51 If there are still many years, [according to them] [he shall pay back] his redemption from the silver [of his purchase price].
52 [But if there are but few] [that do remain] [of the years] until the year of the jubilee, [he must reckon it to him].
According to its years [he must return payment] for his redemption.
53 [Like an employee] [who works one year] to the next, he will be to him. Don't rule him severely, [before your eyes].
54 If he is not redeemed by these means, [he will go free] in the year of the jubilee both himself, and his children beside him.
55 For to Me [the *B'nei Yisrael*] are servants. My slaves [are they], whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am YHWH your God.
26:1 Do not make for yourselves [gods of no worth]. An image or standing pillar [you must not set up] for yourselves.
A stone [that is sculptured] [you must not] set up [within your land], to prostrate before it. [For I indeed] am YHWH your God.
2 My sabbaths [you must keep]. My sanctuary [you must revere]. [end aliyah] Because indeed, I am YHWH.

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresht gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresht, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate the following pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which will have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
⏟Renew our days	⏟(She weeps bitterly)	⏟a fire-offering to God

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalsholet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (notably cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a very distinctive melody—for which purpose extra syllables fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)